

European Witchcraft Trials

CAUSES	COURSE	CONSEQUENCES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unexplained outbreaks of disease, especially the plague • Women folk healers and herbalists were rebellious women who were non-conformists • Women were more open to temptation • Church repression of sexuality • Loss in wartime (Joan of Arc) • Voices in the head = the devil • Reformation/counterreformation • Need for a scapegoat when things go wrong/explain the unknown • Settling political differences • Property rights (unmarried widows) • Commerce controlled by people of Jewish descent • Europe is not fully Christian • Talion is repealed (talony; <i>lex talionis</i>) • Threats to government due to new religious and scientific ideas • Opportunity to exert or expand social control • Tension between classes • Definition of witch has changed due to reformation • Peer pressure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Few trials took place before 1480 and most were over by 1790. • Most in the west were before 1650, while most east of the Elbe River were after that. • 1484 – Pope condemns all witchcraft as heresy; followed by secular governments in 1500s • 1486 – publication of <i>Malleus Maleficarum</i> • Torture was often used to gain information and confessions – the “third degree” • Witches were publicly stripped of the clothes, their head was shaved, and they were to approach their inquisitors backwards. In addition to serving as a public degradation, this ensured that she would not conceal a spell in her clothing. The backwards approach safeguarded her inquisitor from the "evil eye" • C. 100,000 trials btw. 1450 and 1750 with 40,000 to 50,000 executions • SW Germany – 1561-1670 (3229) • Switzerland – 1470-1700 (8888 trials, 5417 executions) • By mid 1600s, the authority of the various churches was weakening • Strong beliefs in witchcraft was weakening in the face of increased education in cities like Rome, Paris, Geneva, London, Edinburgh, Bologna, and Madrid. • Gendercide? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Divide between Catholics and Protestants widens • Continued persecution of Jews • Strict social control of women • Religious control in a region stabilized • People were forced to move • Stifling of science